

Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council

Report to the Joint Education Committee and the Joint Labor, Health and Social Services Interim Committee

June 4, 2013

Early Childhood Facts and Figures

- The most rapid period of development in a human's brain occurs before age 5.¹ Positive early experiences lay a foundation for healthy growth and development, but adverse experiences can weaken that foundation. Children who live in health-promoting environments and have positive early experiences tend to go on to complete more education, have higher-paying jobs, live healthier lifestyles, and live longer, healthier lives. Children who experience significant adversity early in life without consistent support from caring adults are more likely to drop out of school earlier, earn less, depend on more public assistance, adopt a range of unhealthy behaviors, and live shorter and less healthy lives.² **The earliest years of a child's life represent the single greatest chance to make a lasting impact on a child's future learning, behavior and health.**
- The 2009 statewide Instructional Foundations for Kindergarten (If-K) data reported that only 52% of kindergartners had a kindergarten readiness level of "proficient."³ Research tells us that students who start behind stay behind, and most likely never catch up: the same groups of students who are behind by the second and third grades are also behind in first grade and kindergarten and at kindergarten entry.⁴ **If we want to improve our schools, we must first prepare the students we send to them.**
- Studies show that about 60 percent of all American workers live and are employed in the state where they grew up.⁵ **Providing Wyoming's young children with the positive experiences that prepare them for success in school and in life will enable them to become the creative, adaptable, team-ready employees of our future Wyoming workforce.**

¹ National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. (2000.) From Neurons to Neighborhoods: The Science of Early Childhood Development. Washington, D.C. National Academy Press.

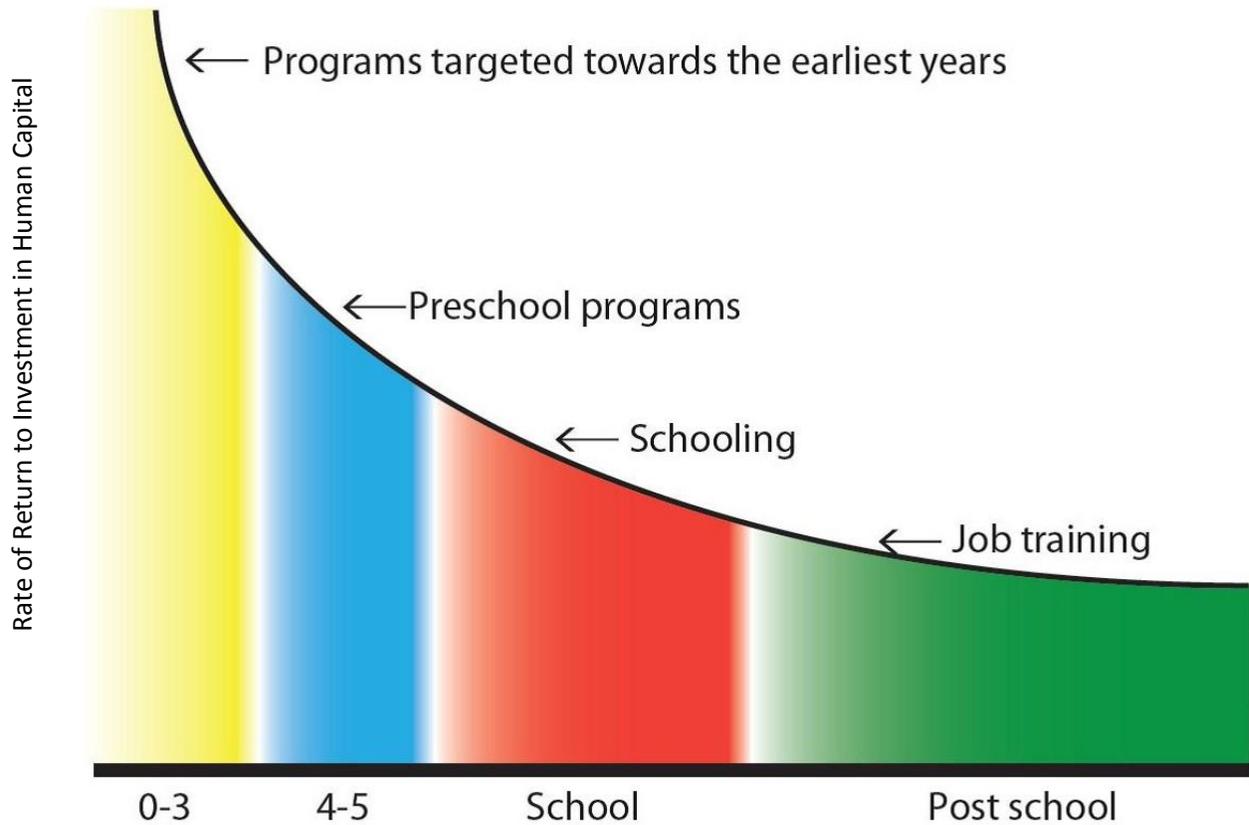
² Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University. How Early Experiences Get Into the Body: A Biodevelopmental Framework. developingchild.harvard.edu/index.php/download_file/-/view/745/

³ Wyoming Department of Education. (2009.) Instructional Foundations for Kindergarten Summary Report.

⁴ Rand Corporation. (2007.) A Rand Corporation Research Brief: The Promise of Preschool for Narrowing Readiness and Achievement Gaps Among California Children.

⁵ Timothy J. Bartick. (2011). Investing in Kids: Early Childhood Programs and Local Economic Development. Kalamazoo: W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research.

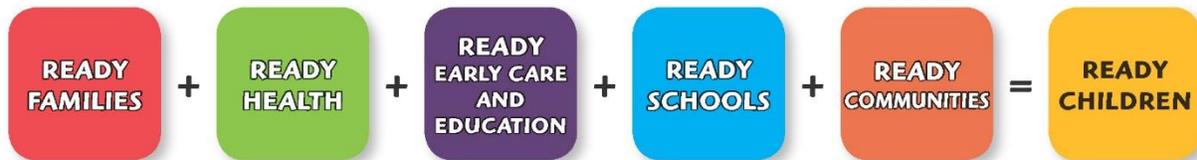
Returns to a Unit Dollar Invested



Heckman, James J. (2008). "Schools, Skills and Synapses," *Economic Inquiry*, 46(3): 289-324

The Early Childhood System in Wyoming

Our work, then, is to identify innovative ways to ensure that our children have the positive experiences and a foundation that ensures they are ready for success in school and in life. Just as readiness for school and life is multifaceted, so too is the environment in which a child grows and develops. To successfully ensure that more children enter school ready to succeed, it is important to consider the family and community context in which they live, the schools they attend, and the services that are available to support their healthy growth and development. The Ready Child Equation⁶ encompasses multiple domains of early development, and focuses on critical elements that – together – support the holistic well-being and success of children.



For our purposes, “readiness” describes the capabilities of children, families, physical and mental health organizations, early care and education environments, schools, and communities to best promote and provide for children’s success in their first year of school and beyond. Each component plays a vital role in the preparation of our children for success in school and in life; no one component can stand on its own.



A ready child is prepared cognitively, physically, socially and personally across many domains: language, literacy, social emotional, social studies, physical development and health, science, logic and reasoning, creative arts expression, mathematics, and approaches to learning. Children develop holistically - growth and development in one area depends upon development in other areas.

⁶ Getting Ready: Findings from the National School Readiness Indicators Initiative. (2005.) Prepared by Rhode Island Kids Count; A 17-state Partnership Sponsored by the David and Lucile Packard Foundation, the Kauffman Foundation and the Ford Foundation.



A ready family has adults who recognize and value that they are the first and most important teacher in a child's life. Ready families take responsibility for their child's or children's preparation for success in school and life through direct, frequent, positive involvement and engagement. They provide steady and supportive relationships, ensure safe and reliable environments, promote good health, and foster curiosity and excitement about learning, and self-control.



Ready health systems provide children and families access to high-quality preventative, continuous and early intervention services to meet their physical, mental, emotional, oral, vision, hearing and nutrition needs. Quality health services are facilitated by skilled professionals who engage in family support and treatment, and are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences.



Ready early care and education professionals accept all children and provide high-quality learning environments by engaging the whole community. A ready early care and education environment provides all children with opportunities to build a positive foundation for confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities. Children in ready early care and education environments are led by skilled professionals who recognize, reinforce and extend children's strengths, and who are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences.



**READY
SCHOOLS**

Ready schools accept all children and provide a seamless transition to formal school environments by engaging the whole community. A ready school welcomes all children with opportunities to enhance and build confidence in their knowledge, skills, and abilities. Children in ready schools are led by skilled teachers who recognize, reinforce and extend children’s strengths, and who are sensitive to cultural values and individual differences.



**READY
COMMUNITIES**

Ready communities play an essential part in supporting families in their role as primary stewards of children’s readiness. Ready communities—including **businesses, nonprofits, faith-based organizations, social service and health organizations, community groups, and local governments**—have to work together to support children’s school and life success by providing families affordable access to information, services, supports and opportunities.

Wyoming Early Childhood Readiness Equation
Wyoming Early Childhood System – An Overview

Ready Children

Families First

Example Support Systems:

- Developmental Screenings
- CDC's
- Home Visiting Programs
- Head starts
- TANF Preschools
- Medical Providers
- Assessment Tools
- If-K
- Other assessment tools used by individual providers or organizations (Head Starts, CDC's, etc)



Ready Families

Families First

Example Support Systems:

- Literacy Programs
- Wyoming Family Literacy
- Raising Readers
- 1st Lady's Initiative
- UW Literacy Center
- Other private programs
- WY Quality Counts
- Resource and Referral
- Home Visiting Programs
- Community Based Parent Support Programs
- Book and a Bite
- Libraries
- MOPS
- Family Fun Nights



Ready Health

Families First

Example Support Systems:

- Physical Health
- Private Providers
- Community Health Centers
- Public Health Nursing
- Mental Health
- Private Providers
- Community Mental Health Centers
- Child Development Centers
- Oral Health
- Private Providers
- Community Health Centers
- Community Oral Health Coordinators
- Nutrition Programs
- SNAP
- CACFP
- TANF



Ready Early Care & Education

Families First

Example Support Systems:

- Friends and Neighbors
- In-home – Nannies
- Licensed family childcare homes and centers
- Private, parent-pay, including centers
- Head Start
- Child Development Centers
- TANF preschools
- Home Visiting
- Early Head Start
- Public Health Nursing
- Parent's as Teachers
- Child Development Centers



Ready Schools

Families First

Example Support Systems:

- Early Learning Guidelines
- WY Quality Counts
- STARS
- Pathways to Professional Development
- Resource and Referral
- Providers Empowering Providers
- UW
- Community Colleges
- Home Visiting Programs



Ready Communities

Families First

Example Support Systems:

- State Level
- State Advisory Council
- Wyoming P-16
- Wyoming Early Intervention Council
- Community Level
- Wyoming Early Childhood Partnership
- Liaison Programs
- Inter Agency Coordinating Councils
- Associations
- Head Start
- Child Development Services
- Wyoming Early Childhood Association
- Private Community Activities

Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council

Mission:

Executive Order 2010-2

The Mission of the Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council is to serve Wyoming children and families by facilitating statewide collaboration, evaluating the early childhood system and making recommendations to the Governor, lawmakers and State Agencies.

Membership:

The council is made up of members from across the state and across the early childhood continuum and includes representatives from state agencies, parents, early childhood providers, nonprofit organizations, and educational institutions.

Current Focus Areas:

Early Learning Guidelines:

The Wyoming Early Childhood State Advisory Council has partnered with early childhood experts across the state to create a set of Early Learning Guidelines focused on children from birth to three years old and a set for children from three to five years old (revision set to be finished in summer 2013). These two tools offer parents, caregivers, early childhood professionals, and policy makers a set of guidelines about development and early learning. They provide information about what to look for as your child grows and develops and how to nurture natural learning patterns and abilities in everyday activities and routines.

Needs Assessment:

The focus on children's preparation and readiness for success in school and in life has driven the Council's work to carry out the directive from the Executive Order⁷ that created the Council to "conduct a periodic statewide needs assessment...and make recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, or other governing bodies regarding the effectiveness of services, programs and activities affecting early childhood development." The Council decided not to publish a needs assessment that offered a snapshot of data about the state of young children, but sought instead to develop a tool that will track Wyoming's progress for young children over time. A Council Committee set out to:

- Identify a set of measurable indicators related to and defining early childhood development and systems' readiness that can be tracked regularly over time;

⁷ Wyoming Executive Order 2010-2. (June, 1 2010). <http://will.state.wy.us/sis/wydocs/execorders/WS-GOV-EO-2010-02.pdf>

- Share this comprehensive, data-driven definition of readiness, fill in the gaps in data availability, and track data over time and report findings to Wyoming citizens; and
- Stimulate policy, program and other actions that will improve the early childhood system to support and prepare all children for success in school and in life.

Collaboration and Coordination

The council currently meets every other month and will be transitioning to a quarterly face-to-face meeting once our current funding stream is up in July. The council shares information about what is happening in different agencies, organizations and programs and looks for ways to work together. Because the early childhood system in Wyoming is decentralized, collaboration is not as effective as it could be.

The State Advisory Council also coordinates with other councils and organizations to try to distribute information about what is happening in the state. This includes work with the Wyoming P-16 Council; the MIECHV grant awardees, Parents as Teachers; the Early Intervention Council; the First Lady's Literacy Initiative.

History

The State of Wyoming has had some version of an Early Childhood Advisory Council since 1997 under the Geringer administration. In 2007 the the Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 required the Governor of each state to:

- Designate or establish a State Advisory Council on early childhood education and care for children birth to school entry; and
- Designate an individual to coordinate activities of the Council.

In 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 provided funding for State Advisory Councils for three years.

This grant funding is finished in July of this year. Ongoing, the basic operations of the council with quarterly meetings and someone to oversee the work, will be funded through the Department of Family Services.